



THE NORTHEAST-MIDWEST COALITION

## GREAT LAKES TASK FORCE

June 7, 2007

The Honorable Mike Johanns  
Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Johanns:

On October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2006, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) issued a federal order to prevent the spread of viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS). We agree that the appropriate steps need to be taken to prevent the spread of such a serious disease, and we are writing to find out what progress has been made to implement a final rule.

The 2006 order has stopped the interstate movement within the Great Lakes states of more than three dozen species of live fish that are susceptible to VHS. The order applies to the federal, state, and provincial hatcheries in the Great Lakes basin. Further the order impacts bait dealers and shops, commercial fish propagators who raise fish for human consumption, lake and pond stocking operations, and other related businesses. Some of these operations are located outside of the Great Lakes basin and may not even conduct business in the Great Lakes basin. Businesses, anglers, and consumers throughout the Great Lakes states feel the economic impacts of this order.

Unfortunately, the 2006 order was only meant to be a temporary measure, and as a temporary measure, the order simply does not fully address all of the issues, such as testing fish for interstate movement, monitoring for any progression of VHS, and coordinating between the federal, state, and tribal authorities. Last fall, we were told that APHIS would try to finalize a final rule to replace the order by the spring of 2007. We are very concerned by the progress in moving forward with an interim and final rule which should have been in place this spring when the fishing season began. We therefore urge you to move forward expeditiously.

We appreciate your consideration of our concerns. We have worked hard over the years to protect and restore the Great Lakes fisheries, and we want to ensure that actions taken are appropriate to that end.

Sincerely,

---

George V. Voinovich  
United States Senator

---

Carl Levin  
United States Senator



Mark Kirk  
Member of Congress



John Dingell  
Member of Congress



Vernon J. Ehlers  
Member of Congress



Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator



Barack Obama  
United States Senator



Richard G. Lugar  
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator



Russ Feingold  
United States Senator



Charles Schumer  
United States Senator



Richard Durbin  
United States Senator



Marcy Kaptur  
Member of Congress



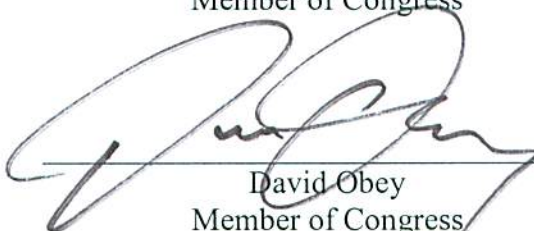
Brian Higgins  
Member of Congress



Candice Miller  
Member of Congress



Thomas Petri  
Member of Congress



David Obey  
Member of Congress

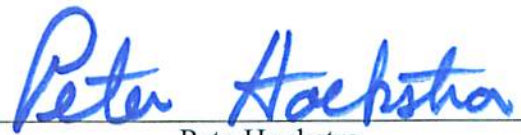


Dale Kildee  
Member of Congress





Bart Stupak  
Member of Congress



Pete Hoekstra  
Member of Congress



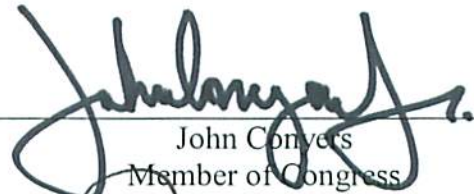
Thaddeus McCotter  
Member of Congress



Tammy Baldwin  
Member of Congress



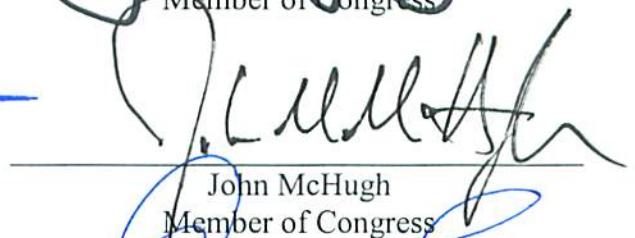
Sander M. Levin  
Member of Congress



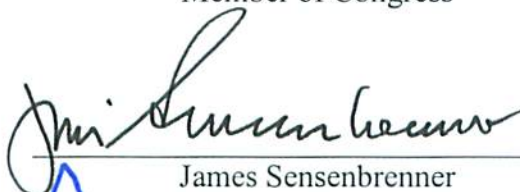
John Conyers  
Member of Congress



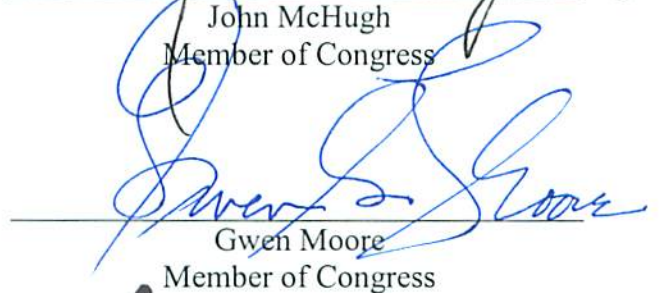
Fred Upton  
Member of Congress



John McHugh  
Member of Congress



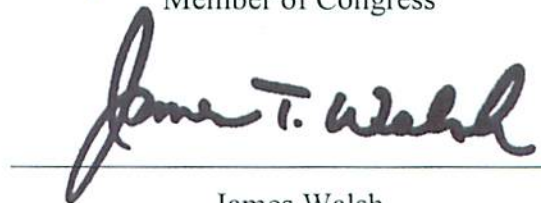
James Sensenbrenner  
Member of Congress



Gwen Moore  
Member of Congress



Dave Camp  
Member of Congress



James Walsh  
Member of Congress

Cc: Dr. Ron DeHaven, APHIS Administrator